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TITLE: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR TEMPORARILY  
IMMOBILIZING A LOCAL AREA OF TISSUE

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**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR TEMPORARILY  
IMMOBILIZING A LOCAL AREA OF TISSUE**

**FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention generally relates to surgery on body tissues and organs. More specifically, the present invention relates to a method and apparatus for temporarily immobilizing a local area of tissue subject to motion, such as the heart wall, which permits a surgical procedure to be performed on that local area of tissue.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Coronary artery disease remains the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in Western societies. Coronary artery disease is manifested in a number of ways. For example, disease of the coronary arteries can lead to insufficient blood flow to various areas of the heart. This can lead to the discomfort of angina and the risk of ischemia. In severe cases, acute blockage of coronary blood flow can result in irreversible damage to the myocardial tissue including myocardial infarction and the risk of death.

A number of approaches have been developed for treating coronary artery disease. In less severe cases, it is often sufficient to merely treat the symptoms, with pharmaceuticals, or treat the underlying causes of the disease, with lifestyle modification. In more severe cases, the coronary blockage can be treated endovascularly or percutaneously using techniques such as balloon angioplasty, atherectomy, laser ablation, stents, and the like.

In cases where these approaches have failed or are likely to fail, it is often necessary to perform a coronary artery bypass graft procedure. This procedure generally consists of the following steps: First, direct access to the heart is achieved. This is usually done by opening the chest by median sternotomy and spreading the left and right rib cage apart; and opening the pericardial sac to achieve direct access to the heart.

Next, a blood vessel or vessels for use in the graft procedure are mobilized from the patient. This usually entails mobilizing either a mammary artery or a saphenous vein, although other graft vessels may also be used.

Next, a heart-lung or cardiopulmonary bypass is performed. This usually entails arterial and venous cannulation, connecting the bloodstream to a heart-lung machine, cooling the body to about 32 degrees Celsius, cross-clamping of the aorta and cardioplegic perfusion of the coronary arteries to arrest

and cool the heart to about 4 degrees Celsius. The arrest or stoppage of the heart is generally required because the constant pumping motion of the beating heart would make surgery upon the heart difficult in some locations and extremely difficult if not impossible in other locations

5                   Once cardiac arrest is achieved, then a graft (or grafts) is attached to the relevant portions of a coronary artery (or arteries) followed by weaning from the cardiopulmonary bypass, restarting the heart and decannulation.

Finally the chest is closed.

10                  One area which may create difficulties for the patient and extra expense and time for the procedure involves the cardiopulmonary bypass. In a cardiopulmonary bypass all the patient's blood, which normally returns to the right atrium, is diverted to a system which supplies oxygen to the blood and removes carbon dioxide and returns the blood, at sufficient pressure, into the patient's aorta for further distribution into the body. Generally such a system requires several separate components, including an oxygenator, several pumps, a reservoir, a blood temperature control system, filters as well as flow, pressure and temperature sensors.

15                  Problems may develop during cardiopulmonary bypass due to the reaction blood has to non-endothelialized surfaces, i.e. surfaces unlike those

of a blood vessel. In particular, exposure of blood to foreign surfaces results in the activation of virtually all the humoral and cellular components of the inflammatory response, as well as some of the slower reacting specific immune responses. Other complications from cardiopulmonary bypass include loss of red blood cells and platelets due to shear stress damage. In addition, cardiopulmonary bypass requires the use of an anticoagulant, such as heparin. This may, in turn, increase the risk of hemorrhage. Finally cardiopulmonary bypass sometimes necessitates giving additional blood to the patient. The additional blood, if from a source other than the patient, may expose the patient to blood born diseases.

Due to the risks incurred during cardiopulmonary bypass, others have attempted to perform a coronary artery bypass graft procedure without cardiac arrest and cardiopulmonary bypass. For example, Trapp and Bisarya in "Placement of Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Without Pump Oxygenator", Annals Thorac. Surg. Vol. 19, No. 1, (Jan. 1975) pgs. 1-9, immobilized the area of the bypass graft by encircling sutures deep enough to incorporate enough muscle to suspend an area of the heart and prevent damage to the coronary artery. More recently Fanning et al. in "Reoperative Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting Without Cardiopulmonary Bypass", Annals Thorac. Surg. Vol. 55, (Feb. 1993) pgs. 486-

489 also reported immobilizing the area of the bypass graft with stabilization sutures.

While these attempts have achieved some success, they generally require enhanced skill of the surgeon to properly create the anastomosis because, even with sutures, the beating heart continues to move in the relevant area more than desired.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is thus an object of the present invention to provide a method and apparatus for temporarily immobilizing a local area of tissue, such as an area of a beating heart, without requiring the use of stabilizing sutures.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a method and apparatus to facilitate performing coronary artery bypass graft surgery on a beating heart.

It is the further object of the present invention to provide a method and apparatus to perform a coronary artery bypass graft without requiring the heart to be arrested or stopped and the patient coupled to a cardiopulmonary bypass machine.

These and other objectives are met by the present invention which comprises a method and apparatus for temporarily immobilizing a local area of tissue. In particular, the present invention provides a method and apparatus for temporarily immobilizing a local area of heart tissue to thereby permit surgery on

5 a coronary vessel in that area without significant deterioration of the pumping function of the beating heart. The local area of heart tissue is immobilized to a degree sufficient to permit minimally invasive or micro-surgery on that area of the heart. The present invention features a suction device to accomplish the immobilization. The suction device is coupled to a source of negative pressure.

10 The suction device has a series of suction ports on one surface. Suction through the device causes suction to be maintained at the ports. The device further is shaped to conform to the surface of the heart. Thus, when the device is placed on the surface of the heart and suction is created, the suction through the ports engages the surface of the heart. The suction device is further fixed or

15 immobilized to a stationary object, such as an operating table or a sternal or rib retractor. Thus, the local area of the heart near the suction device is temporarily fixed or immobilized relative to the stationary object while suction is maintained. In such a fashion, the coronary artery may be immobilized even though the heart itself is still beating so that a bypass graft may be performed. In addition the

20 suction device may be used in either a conventional, open-chest environment or in a minimally-invasive environment, e.g. endoscopic.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

The foregoing and other aspects of the present invention will best be appreciated with reference to the detailed description of the invention in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

5           FIG. 1 is a plan view of the device being used to temporarily immobilize a local area of heart tissue in which access to the heart is achieved through a mini-thoractomy.

FIGS. 2a and 2b depict a first type of suction device shown in use in FIG. 1.

10           FIGS. 3a and 3b depict a second type of suction device shown in use in FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is a longitudinal sectional view of the suction paddle used in the present invention.

15           FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the suction paddle used in the present invention taken along the line 5-5 of FIG. 4.

FIG. 6 is a longitudinal sectional view of the suction arm used in the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a plan view of the suction arm used in the present invention.

FIG. 8 is a detailed view of a pair of suction devices being positioned on a heart and spread apart.

5 FIGS. 9 and 10 show the effect of the spread-apart motion depicted in FIG. 8.

10 FIG. 11 is an example of the motion in the plane parallel to the surface of the heart of a point on heart tissue during one half respiratory cycle when the heart is unrestrained and also depicting the motion of the same point on heart tissue when the suction devices are used.

FIG. 12 is an enlarged portion of FIG. 11 depicting the motion of the same point on heart tissue when the suction devices are used.

FIG. 13 is an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

15 FIG. 14 is a plan view of the device being used to temporarily immobilize a local area of heart tissue in which access to the heart is achieved through a median sternotomy.

FIG. 15 is a side view of an alternate embodiment of the present invention, shown placed against the surface of the heart.

FIG. 16 is a bottom view of the alternate embodiment of the present invention device shown in FIG. 15.

5 FIG. 17 is a side view of a further alternate embodiment of the present invention, shown placed against the surface of the heart.

FIG. 18 is a bottom view of still further alternate embodiment of the present invention.

10 FIG. 19 is a cross-sectional view of a body showing an alternative method of achieving access to the surface of the heart, and in particular of achieving such access using minimally invasive trocars.

The drawings are not necessarily to scale.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

15 FIG. 1 is a view of the immobilizing device 11 being used to temporarily immobilize an area of heart tissue. In the preferred embodiment, surgical access to the local area of heart tissue is achieved through a mini-

thoracotomy, preferably performed within either the fourth or fifth intercostal space. An incision 10 of approximately 10 centimeters is made into chest cavity between the ribs (seen here in phantom.) The rib cartilage may be temporarily removed and the ribs surrounding the incision slightly spread apart using a

5 retractor (not shown) to provide adequate surgical access to the mammary artery and the heart. As seen, a pair of suction devices 12, 13 are introduced. The first suction device 12 is introduced through a small stab wound 8 in between the ribs approximately 10 cm. below incision 10. This stab wound is made in any acceptable manner. Incidentally, once the surgery has been completed, the stab

10 wound may be used for the thorax drain after the closure of the chest. As discussed below with reference to FIG. 19, the suction device has a covering 180, made from latex rubber, over the distal end when it penetrates the chest wall in order to avoid blood and tissue from entering the suction ports and block suction apertures. Once suction device is introduced, covering 180 is removed

15 and the distal end is positioned onto heart. The second suction device 13 is introduced through incision 10 onto the surface of the heart. As seen, the distal end of each suction device is ultimately positioned in the local area of heart tissue to be immobilized, i.e. on either side of a coronary artery upon which a graft is to be made.

As seen, suction devices 12, 13 are secured using securing devices 14, 15 respectively to a stationary object, such as surgical table 16. Of course other objects besides the surgical table may be used as a stationary object, including the floor, ceiling or even the patient, such as a portion of the skeletal system of the patient, e.g. the sternum. In the preferred embodiment, each securing device 14,15 is a variable friction arm, model no. 244 available from Manfrotto Nord, Inc. of Zona Industriale di Villapaiera, I-32032 Feltre BL, Italy. Each securing device 14, 15 has a series of elbow joints 17 which may be locked in position. Thus the securing device permits the suction device to be locked into any position desired within three-dimensional space. Although not shown, each securing device (or each suction device or both) may also be interconnected such that a truss type structure is created and the entire stiffness or rigidity of the immobilizing device 11 is improved.

Suction devices 12, 13 are coupled to a suction source 114 through lines 20, 21. Suction source 114 is preferably the standard suction available in the operating room and coupled to the devices with a two liter buffer flask (not shown) for each device. Suction is provided at a negative pressure of between 200-600 mm Hg with 400 mm Hg preferred. As seen, each suction device has essentially two portions, a paddle 22 and an arm 23. FIGS. 2 and 3 detail suction devices 12 and 13 respectively.

Turning now to FIGS. 2a and 2b, FIG. 2a is a side view of a suction device 12 showing its placement against the outline of a heart. As seen, the distal end of suction device comprises a paddle 22 and arm 23 coupled together by a continuous hinge or neck 71. Paddle 22 has a generally planar surface which conforms generally to the curvature of a heart 1, shown here in outline. In the preferred embodiment, suction arm 23 is coupled to suction paddle 22 such that suction paddle 22 may be rotated or bent to achieve the desired orientation relative to arm 23. This is accomplished by neck 71. Neck 71 is fashioned to be relatively bendable, that is to be bent by hand into the desired orientation, as opposed to paddle 22 and arm 23, which are rigid. In the preferred embodiment suction paddle 22 and suction arm 23 are constructed of stainless steel 316, while neck 71 is constructed of stainless steel 321. Of course other means may be provided to permit paddle 22 to move or rotate relative to arm 23 other than making neck 71 to be malleable by hand, such as a locking hinge as well as a remotely actuatable joint, as is well known in the art. See for example, U.S. Patent No. 5,374,277 of Hassler, incorporated herein by reference. A remotely actuatable hinge is believed particularly advantageous for a suction device used endoscopically. In an alternate embodiment paddle may be fixed in a rigid orientation relative to arm. As seen, arm 23 has a suction lumen 30 therethrough which communicates with a suction conduit 31 in paddle 22

through neck lumen 72. Suction conduit 31 in paddle 22 further communicates through suction hole 32 (best seen in FIG. 2b) to suction port 33.

FIG. 2b is a view of the bottom of suction device 12. As seen, in the preferred embodiment four suction ports 33 in a row are featured, although 5 the specific or exact number and position used may vary. Each suction port 33 has a suction aperture 32, each of which are preferably located at a position off-center from suction port 33. Suction apertures 32 are positioned off center from suction ports 33 so that if a large upwelling of tissue is caused by the suction (which may occur as a blister or bell-shaped curve) the tissue will not 10 immediately close off the suction by obstructing suction aperture 32, as it would if the aperture were in the center of suction port 33. In addition, each suction aperture 32 has a much smaller diameter as compared to the diameter of suction port 33. This creates a high resistance pathway between suction port 33 and suction conduit 31 which permits the loss of a tissue-to-port seal in one suction 15 port (and thus loss of fixation of the suction port to the tissue) to not also cause a precipitous pressure drop in the remainder of the suction ports. In the preferred embodiment suction aperture 32 has a diameter of 2 mm and suction port 33 has a diameter of 6 mm.

Turning now to FIGS. 3a and 3b, FIG. 3a is a side view of a suction 20 device 13 shown in FIG. 1. As seen, the distal end of suction device 13

comprises paddle 22 and arm 23 coupled together by a continuous hinge or neck 71. Paddle 22 has a generally planar surface which conforms generally to the curvature of a heart 1. In the preferred embodiment, suction arm 23 is coupled to suction paddle 22 such that suction paddle 22 may be rotated or bent along any of the three axes to achieve the desired orientation relative to arm 23.

5 This is accomplished by neck 71. Neck 71 is substantially similar to that discussed in FIG. 2a but for the fact that suction device 13 has suction paddle 22 at an angled orientation to suction arm 23. In the preferred embodiment suction paddle 22 of suction device 13 is perpendicular to suction arm 23, although other angular orientations may be used.

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FIG. 3b is a view of the bottom of suction device 13. As seen, in the preferred embodiment suction paddle 22 of suction device 13 is substantially similar to that described in FIG. 2b. In the preferred embodiment suction aperture 32 has a diameter of 2 mm and suction port 33 has a diameter of 6 mm.

15 FIG. 4 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of suction paddle 22 used in immobilizing device 11. As seen, paddle 22 has a series of suction ports 33 each of which is connected to suction conduit 31 through a suction aperture 32. Each suction port 33 has generally straight, cylindrical sides. Of course other configurations may be used, such as cone-shaped suction ports, 20 dome-shaped suction ports, etc.

FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the suction paddle 22 taken along the line 5-5 of FIG. 4. As seen, suction port 33 is connected to suction conduit 31 through suction aperture 32. Suction paddle 22 has a canted or slanted surface 36 at the top. Through this type of surface, area 37 may be better accessed for performing surgical procedures.

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FIG. 6 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of suction arm 23. Distal end 71 of suction arm 23 has neck 71 (not shown in this FIG.) fixed thereto. As seen, arm 23 has a suction lumen 30 therethrough which communicates with suction conduit 31 in paddle 22 through neck lumen 72 of neck 71 (shown in phantom in this FIG.). As seen in FIG. 7, which is a plan view of suction arm 23, proximal end 75 has a series of knurled ridges 76 to facilitate coupling a suction line coming from suction source (not shown in this FIG) to suction arm 23.

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FIG. 8 is a detailed view of a pair of suction devices 12, 13 being positioned on a heart and spread apart. As seen, paddles 22, 27 of each device generally are placed in the area 34 in which temporary immobilization of the heart tissue is desired. When used for a coronary bypass graft, area 34 typically will have a coronary artery 35 running therethrough. Area 34 is between paddles

22, 27. Once placed about area 34, suction is then created in the suction ports (not shown in this view.) Through the suction, the device then is fixed to or grabs hold of the heart tissue.

Once the suction is created and the paddles are secured to the  
5 heart tissue, each of the suction devices are then spread slightly apart as shown  
by the arrows 40, 41 to the positions shown as 42, 43. The effect of this  
spreading apart is to cause a tension to be created in the area 34 of the heart  
tissue between the paddles. The tension causes the area 34 to be further  
immobilized, and in particular in the Z-direction, i.e. in the direction normal to the  
10 plane defined by the surface of the heart. This is represented in FIGS. 9 and 10.

As seen in FIG. 9, the area of heart tissue between the paddles,  
even with the placement of the paddles, still has some vertical motion, shown  
here as arrow 50. When paddles 22, 27 are slightly spread apart to cause a  
tension in that area 34 of tissue between the paddles, as depicted in FIG. 10,  
15 then the amount of movement in the area 34 between the paddles 22, 27 due to  
the tension is further decreased, especially in the Z-direction, i.e. the direction  
perpendicular to the surface of the heart 1. Once the paddles 22, 27 are thus  
positioned and secured and the area of the tissue is temporarily immobilized, the  
coronary artery in that area may be operated upon.

In the preferred embodiment, the anastomosis of the coronary artery may be accomplished through any acceptable end-to-side or side-to-side technique. Of course, other methods of performing the anastomosis may be used, such as those methods which may be performed endoscopically.

5 FIG. 11 is an example of the motion in the plane parallel to the surface of the heart of a point on heart tissue during one half respiratory cycle when the heart is unrestrained and also depicting the motion of the same point on heart tissue when the suction devices are used. Line 60 is a tracing of the motion of a point of tissue on the cardiac surface. As seen by line 60, a point on  
10 the cardiac surface moves approximately 15 mm in each direction. Generally, each loop of movement depicts the motion of the beating heart within one cardiac cycle. Thus, loop 61 occurs due to one cardiac cycle. Loop 62 occurs due to the next cardiac cycle, but the entire heart has shifted in location somewhat due to the inflation or deflation of the lungs associated with respiration. Line 63 shows the motion of the same point of heart tissue when  
15 the suction device is placed near the area and the heart wall is immobilized by the present invention. As seen, the present invention functions to minimize heart wall movement in that area to approximately 1 mm in each direction. This is best seen in FIG. 12 which is an enlarged portion of FIG. 11 and in particular line 63.  
20 As seen, through the use of the present invention, heart wall movement has

been decreased to only slightly more than 1 mm. Decreased to an amount in the area of the suction devices such that the still-beating heart may be operated upon in that area using an endoscope or any other method of minimally invasive surgery.

5 FIG. 13 is an alternate embodiment of the present invention. As seen, the embodiment of FIG. 13 comprises a suction sleeve 80 which is coupled to an annular suction head 81 via a ball bearing joint 84. Ball bearing joint 84 may be provided so as to permit remote actuation of the suction head 81 from a position outside the chest. The suction head 81 has a series of suction ports 82 located along a first planar surface. In the embodiment shown the planar surface upon which the suction ports 82 are located is conical in shape, although other types of planar surface may be used, such as frusto-conical for example. The suction head 81 may be constructed such that each half of the device is coupled to a separate suction source. Through such a configuration, if one-half of the suction head 81 were to lose contact with the surface, the other one-half of the suction head 81 could maintain capture. The suction sleeve 80 is used as described above. That is the suction sleeve 80 itself is coupled to a suction source (not shown but the same as suction source 114) and is fixed or immobilized to a stationary point, such as the operating table or a retractor (also not shown.) Suction through the suction source and the suction sleeve 80 then

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causes the suction ports 82 to suck upon the heart tissue. Through this configuration, then, the heart tissue in the center of suction sleeve is immobilized. Interruption or opening 83 permits suction head 81 to be fixed to heart tissue while permitting a blood vessel to be grafted. In particular, if a 5 mammary artery has been grafted end-to-side to a coronary artery, then the opening 83 permits the suction head 81 to be removed from around the grafted artery.

FIG. 14 is a view of the device being used to temporarily immobilize a local area of heart tissue using an alternative access procedure to the 10 preferred mini-thoracotomy. In particular heart 1 is exposed with an incision 2 through the patient's sternum and the chest is spread apart by a retractor 3 to provide access to the heart 1. Access to the heart 1 is further effected by retraction of the pericardium 4 in the area of the heart 1 which is to be operated on. As shown pericardial retraction is accomplished through sutures 5.

15 As seen, the immobilizing device 11 comprises a pair of suction devices 12, 13 and a suction source 114. Suction devices 12, 13 are secured to patient be securing each to retractor 3 through a pair of clamps 19. Of course suction devices 12, 13 may also be secured to the operating table (not shown in this FIG. but using a securing device as described above.) Suction devices are 20 coupled to suction source 114 through lines 20, 21. Suction source 114 is

preferably the standard suction available in the operating room and coupled to the devices with a two liter buffer flask (not shown) for each device. Suction is provided at a negative pressure of between 200-600 mm Hg with 400 mm Hg preferred. As seen, each suction device has essentially two portions, a paddle 5 22 and an arm 23.

Turning now to FIG. 15 which is a side view of an alternate embodiment of suction device 12 showing its placement against the outline of a heart. As seen, the distal end of suction device comprises a paddle 22 and arm 23. Paddle 22 has a generally planar surface which conforms generally to the curvature of a heart 1, shown here in outline. The paddle 22 is coupled to arm 10 23 through a pin 24. The pin 24 permits the paddle 22 to be swiveled to the preferred angle relative to arm 23. As seen, arm 23 has a suction lumen 30 therethrough which communicates with a suction conduit 31 in paddle 22. Suction conduit 31, in turn, communicates through suction aperture 32 (best 15 seen in FIG. 4) to suction port 33.

FIG. 16 is a view of the bottom of suction device 12 shown in FIG. 15. As seen, four suction ports 33 in a row are featured, although the specific or exact number and position used may vary.

FIG. 17 is a further alternate embodiment of a suction device 12 showing its placement against the outline of a heart. As seen, suction device 12 is substantially similar to that shown and described in FIG. 2, but for the addition of suture coil 73. Suture coil 73 is a tightly wound spring fixed to the top surface of suction paddle 22. Further temporary stabilization of the coronary anastomosis site may be achieved, if desired, by catching epicardial flaps with light traction sutures. Suture coil 73 permits these and any other sutures to be temporarily fixed in place by wedging the suture between within suture coil 73, as is known in the art.

FIG. 18 is a bottom view of a further alternate embodiment of suction device 12. As seen, suction device 12 is substantially similar to that shown and described in FIG. 2, but for the addition of electrode 174 along a side of suction paddle 22. Electrode 174 is coupled by lead 175 to pulse generator 176. Electrode 174, lead 175 and pulse generator 176 may be provided according to well know methods and materials so as to permit the heart to be paced, cardioverted or defibrillated while suction device 12 is fixed to the surface of the heart.

FIG. 19 is a cross-sectional view of a body showing an alternate method of achieving access to a surface of the heart and using the present invention to immobilize an area of tissue. As seen suction device 12 is

introduced through a first stab wound. As discussed above, suction arm 23 of device 12 is secured by securing device 14 to a stationary object, such as operating table 16. A second suction device may also be introduced through a second stab wound to securely immobilize a local area of tissue. Each suction device has a covering 180, made from latex rubber, over the distal end when it penetrates the chest wall in order to avoid blood and tissue from entering the suction ports and block suction apertures. Two or more additional surgical trocars 78 may be introduced to permit endoscopy and surgical access to heart

5           1. In addition the left lung 79 may also be partially collapsed so as to provide an unencumbered area in which to manipulate the surgical instruments.

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As disclosed, the present invention relates to a method and apparatus for immobilizing tissue. In the preferred embodiment, the invention is used to immobilize heart tissue for a coronary artery bypass graft procedure using either an open or closed chest approach, without the need for a cardiopulmonary bypass. Other surgical techniques, however, which require immobilizing body tissue may also be performed using the present invention, such as surgery on other organs such as the stomach, gall bladder, etc., as well as on other body tissues, such as the eye or the skin, for example. In addition, while the present invention has been described in detail with particular reference

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20           to a preferred embodiment and alternate embodiments, it should be understood

variations and modifications can be effected within the scope of the following claims. Such modifications may include substituting elements or components which perform substantially the same function in substantially the same way to achieve substantially the same result for those described herein.

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